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CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH GERMANY MIGHT WELCOME A SEPARATE PEACE WITH RUSSIA

Description

A political analysis of conditions under which Germany might welcome a separate peace with Russia.

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The German ruling groups recognize that there is no further prospect of successfully concluding the war with the United Nations as long as these maintain a unified front. They also appreciate that there is no possibility of a negotiated peace with the United Nations as a whole. Their only hope of emerging from the war with any profit or without serious loss is, therefore, to make with one or more of their opponents a separate arrangement which could then be imposed upon the rest. They would prefer to deal with the West. If, as appears certain, this should prove impracticable, they would readily accommodate themselves to the necessity of seeking a separate peace with Russia. It can be assumed, however, that Berlin is aware of the improbability of achieving this as long as the Hitler regime exists. The problem of a separate peace, so far as Germany is concerned, is therefore essentially limited to the conditions under which a non-Nazi government could be established and the terms under which it would be ready to deal with Russia.

A regime which could conceivably conclude a separate peace with Russia would have to be:

1. Sufficiently divorced from the Nazi pattern to accommodate itself to the conditions laid down in the pronouncements of the Kremlin or of agencies that operate under its sponsorship (Free Germany Committee).

2. Strong enough to contain the enemy on all fronts while negotiations with Russia are in progress and then to continue defensive operations

in the West until the Anglo-Americans recognize the impossibility of decisive victory. This presupposes the control of some 250 divisions whose discipline and essential equipment remain basically intact.

3. Endowed with a combination of national and popular appeal sufficient to secure and maintain during a transition period the support both of the army and of the mass of the population.

Conditions Under Which a Non-Nazi Regime Might Be Established

This discussion deals in terms of a transition regime combining authoritarian and popular aspects. Such a regime alone can be expected to maintain effective control of the army and, at the same time, rally sufficient popular support to maintain economic production and most essential internal order. It is recognized that if the Nazi regime were once overthrown, the momentum of the forces of disintegration could easily carry the country into a condition of complete political chaos. In that event all suppositions here set forth would become invalid.

The removal of Hitler and the setting up of a non-Nazi regime could come about in a variety of ways. Of necessity it would have to take the form of a "palace revolution" engineered by the army leadership or a section of it, probably in connivance with big industrial interests, a portion of the bureaucracy, and a sprinkling of "repentent" Nazi leaders. The impetus could come from:

1. Progressive disintegration of the German military and/or political situation to the point where the Nazi leadership approaches a state of collapse.

2. A severe military defeat which would crystallise instantly all forces that are hostile to the regime or have lost confidence in it.

3. The death of Hitler, especially if it occurred suddenly or as the result of an act of violence.

In any event, the forces which would seize control would have to be drawn from the present military, economic and administrative leadership. Only such a regime could hope to maintain control of the army and of the governmental machine. At the same time, it would be imperative to appeal for popular support by commitments in respect to a future democratic orientation and, coincidently, by erecting something of a democratic facade, perhaps by inviting representatives of former political parties to participate in a provisional government. The regime would also be obliged to announce its adherence to a "peace program", and would probably address to Germany's enemies an immediate invitation to enter into negotiations. If, as may be assumed, this overture were rejected by the Anglo-Americans, the next logical step would be an attempt to enter into separate negotiations with Russia. The time factor would here be of vital significance:

1. Should the non-Nazi regime negotiate for weeks for a separate peace, it is unlikely that it would be able to retain control of the home front and, in consequence, of the army.

2. The situation would be radically altered if the new government assumed power with a concluded peace treaty or would succeed in attaining peace or the visible prospect of peace within a short time (say one or two weeks) thereafter. In this case it could count on powerful support

from:

a. The Communist underground if so instructed by Russia.

b. The Eastern oriented parts of the traditional ruling groups.

c. The masses of war-weary people who now begin to see an end of the struggle.

d. Many who have stuck to the Nazi regime for fear of a Russian occupation, a fear that would be allayed (if not necessarily removed) by a separate peace.

Terms Acceptable to a Non-Nazi Regime

For the purposes of the following discussion, it is assumed that the Kremlin is fundamentally disposed in favor of a separate arrangement with Germany in order to secure a dominent role in the reconstitution of Europe, or because it had lost hope or desire to enter into a collective settlement with the Anglo-Americans. It is further assumed that it would reject any deal with Germany that would leave the latter in a position to renew the war at a later date (as after a subsequent arrangement with the West). On the German side the question, therefore, becomes one of the willingness of a new regime to offer such "guarantees" as would reassure Stalin on this point:

1. The ruling groups even of the existing regime would, at the present stage, be ready (and more than ready) to settle with Russia on the basis of the frontiers of June 1941. They might be willing to make even greater concessions, but hardly such as would satisfy Russian requirements in respect to future security. The German military and political position must therefore deteriorate a great deal further before such

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minimum conditions as the Soviets could be expected to exact would prove acceptable.

2. The overthrow of Hitler and the erection of a non-Nazi regime would probably derive from a marked worsening of the German military and/or political position. It would also result in an immediate further deterioration, the natural consequence of confusion, the clash of conflicting interests, and the relaxation of political bonds. German internal morale is believed to already approximate that of the late summer of 1918. The difference between that situation and the one which exists now is represented by the rigid framework of the Nazi Party, which maintains such political and social discipline that individual morale is no longer of supreme significance. The overthrow of the Party would therefore decrease German capacity to resist sufficiently to oblige any new regime to make vastly greater concessions to Russia than the frontiers of June 1941. The limit of such concessions would only be reached at that point where they would involve greater dangers and sacrifices than could be expected in the event of surrender to the Anglo-Americans or to the United Nations as a whole.

3. At present, the Germans are fearful that defeat would involve destruction of their national unity. They are also afraid of wholesale massacre at the hands of outraged neighbors, of a long and impoverishing occupation, of the amputation of large border areas, and of economic extermination. Prisoner interrogations indicate that some Germans even take seriously threats of sterilization that have been made by hysterical

elements in this country. These interrogations also show that they are far more fearful of the sufferings they would endure at the hands of a completely victorious Russia than at those of the Anglo-Americans. If no reassuring commitments are made by any of their opponents, we can safely assume that they will prefer the early entry of Anglo-American forces so as to forestall as much as possible a Russian occupation. It is also probable that if any kind of reassurance on the above-mentioned points were to come from the West they would reject any deal with Russia by which they would be placed at the mercy of the Soviets. On the other hand, if they are forced to chose between surrender to the Western Powers without any previous commitment on their part and fairly generous Russian assurance on the points now causing them greatest anxiety, most groups would opt for the latter.

4. Conditions which would seem to provide Russia the most satisfactory "guarantees" for her security would probably include a retirement to the frontiers of 1914 (possibly including Austria and the Sudetenland), the partial demilitarization of the eastern frontier of Germany by the dismantling of airdromes, etc., and the evacuation of all or part of the Balkans. Such concessions would be difficult for any German regime. Readiness on the part of a newly formed government to make them would certainly depend on the circumstances, in particular the stage reached by the deterioration of the military situation in the East:

a. If the Dnieper front were approximately intact, the evacuation of all Russian territory (as of June 1941) would probably be the first German offer.

b. If the Dnieper front is lost though the Bug line could be defended, the Germans might offer to withdraw to the 1914 frontier with the following clauses, which would be intended to safeguard the continued resistance in the West:

1) The retention of the whole of Upper Silesia (including the Czechoslovak area), since this region is indispensable to the German industrial effort. The same for the oilfields in Polish Galicia.

2) Evacuation of only the eastern Balkans (Romania and Bulgaria) in return for a Russian pledge to furnish an adequate oil supply from Romania.

3) Coupled with these short term conditions, a complete evacuation of the Balkans, and Western and Northern Europe after the restoration of peace.

The maximum Russian demands outlined above would represent the ultimate of concessions and would be acceptable to a non-Nazi regime only if:

1. The Soviet government committed itself officially to the program of the Free Germany Manifesto and to the most favorable interpretations of that document. This might involve an extension of the promised amnesty for deserters from Hitlerism to all elements participating in the new regime, the limitation of the concept of "war profiteers" whose punishment has been threatened, the continuation of the army in something like its present form, renewed emphasis on the maintenance of private property, etc.

2. The Russians agreed to supply Germany with the economic requirements for the continuation of defensive operations in the West, in particular

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those which would otherwise be lost by evacuation of the Balkans.

It goes without saying that such concessions as are here outlined would only be made by Germany in a period of desperation and only if the one alternative were an unconditional surrender in which both the West and the Russians would remain uncommitted. It must be kept in mind that in such a case both Russia and the Western Powers (perhaps also Germany's maltreated neighbors) would march in without any assurance having been given.

It is assumed that the Germans would value Russian assurances only in such degree as they conformed with Russian interests. It can be demonstrated, however, that, assuming the Russians were anxious for a separate deal at all, they would have compelling motives for maintaining its essential elements. This discussion having been based on the assumption that Russia has decided to dominate Europe in defiance of the Anglo-Americans, the preservation of German military strength to the point where it could offer a barrier to Anglo-American penetration of the continent would represent her vital interest. This would be for the Germans the best guarantee against a resumption of the Russian drive.